

Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Finds from Cistern No. 1 at Thorikos

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Introduction

Attica at the transition from the Late Classical to the Early Hellenistic period (i.e. *ca.* 350-250 BCE) is one of the lesser-known areas in the domain of Greek archaeology. Traditionally, a strong research focus has always been on the (Early and High) Classical period of Athens, i.e. the 5th century BCE because of the leading role Athens played in geopolitics, literature, arts, philosophy and science.

One of the decisive economic factors in the Athenian success story has been its access to the silver mining area of the Laurion in south-eastern Attica. Within the region, Thorikos played a substantial role as a supplier of silver; it shows metallurgic activity from the Late Archaic period to the Early Classical period after which activities seem to have ceased until the beginning of the 4th century BCE.

During the second quarter of the 4th century BCE a boom in mining activities appears to have taken place. Proof of the resumption of such activities can be found in a lease dated to 367 BCE (Crosby 1950, 190). Apart from new mining leases dating to this period, a large number of 'inkwell' lamps, good chronological markers, were found in and around Mine no. 3, and have been used as an additional body of evidence.¹ Also, in the Industrial Quarter considerable building activity took place, which points to a reoccupation of this part of the site during the second quarter of the 4th century BCE (Mussche 1998, 64; Docter, Van Liefferinge 2010, 58). The function of this part of the site seems to have changed from a residential area in the 5th century BCE to a markedly industrial one in the second quarter of the 4th.

The generally held view, based upon the epigraphical and archaeological evidence, is that at the end of the 4th century BCE decline set in, slowly at first, but faster near the close of the century (Mussche 1998, 64). Since Thorikos played a pivotal role in the Laurion mining district, the archaeological record of the site may be expected to reflect the vicissitudes of economic life in the region and perhaps even, by extension, of Athens and Attica. The precise chronology of this 'closing' phase of Thorikos, however, has not been established conclusively yet. A preliminary inventory of

¹ Mussche 1967a, 47-62; Blondé 1983, 115-132, 170, nos. 192-195, 197-209, 211-213, 215-216, 218-221, 223-224, 241, 243, 248-249. The use of these lamps as additional indicators for the resumption of activities in the second quarter of the 4th century BCE (as in Mussche 1998, 64) would, however, lead to a circular argument. Blondé (1983, 118-120), in fact, used the epigraphically attested resumption of mining activities as an argument to date the start of these inkwell lamps to the (early) second quarter of the 4th, rather than to the middle of the 4th as Howland (*Agora* IV, 61) did on the basis of the Athenian evidence.

published finds dated to the general period 350-250 BCE in Thorikos yields not inconsiderable amounts of material distributed over the whole site (see **Fig. 1**). Some of these finds date to the first half of the 3rd century BCE (see also Blondé 1983, 119). One may, therefore, ask whether mining continued, possibly on a smaller scale, or whether habitation continued on a different economic basis.

Historical background

Historically, the latter part of the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic period in Attica can be seen as a period of turmoil as a result of Macedonian involvement in Greece and subsequent dominance over the area: the sequence of war and conflicts had a dramatic effect on the economical workings of the countryside. Starting with the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE one conflict followed another. Athens' loss of control over the strategic Mounychia hill in Piraeus and thus over the harbour between 322-307 and 295-229 BCE, had a considerable impact upon economic activities that took place in the countryside around Athens. The Chremonidian war of the years 265-261 BCE brought civil unrest and destruction to Attica. For the better part of the 3rd century BCE the Athenian polis is thought to have been no longer in control of its own territory due to the presence of foreign garrisons (Oliver 2007).

Summary of Late Classical / Early Hellenistic finds across Thorikos (Fig. 1)

Although very little attention has been paid to finds from the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic period, this does not mean they are not present in the (ceramic) repertoire. One of the major finds of the site can even be placed in this very period: the monetary hoard found during the 1969 campaign (Bingen 1973; Bingen 2010). This hoard was uncovered in *insula* 2, in the Industrial Quarter. 282 Attic tetradrachms from the late 4th century BCE and 10 other coins from different places were found in a chytra. Among the other coins were four non-Attic gold staters, a posthumous striking of Philip II in Macedonia, to be dated around 310 BCE as well as an Athenian gold stater assigned to 301-294 BCE and a silver tetradrachm of Alexander the Great. The closing date of the hoard, which has always been linked to the abandonment of the site, can thus be placed around 295 BCE (Bingen 1973, 18-21; Bingen 2010, 64-65).

In several places in Thorikos, lamps point to Late Classical and Early Hellenistic activity on the site. Mine no. 3 for example provided a considerable number of 'inkwell' lamps that can be dated from *ca.* 370 to 260 BCE.² This strongly suggests that exploitation of Mine no. 3 still took place in the late 4th/early 3rd century BCE.³

² See above, n. 1, and the other lamp types of the 4th and early 3rd century BCE, Blondé 1983, 99-114.

³ For a similar deposit from the Agora excavations with inkwell lamps cf. *Agora* XII, 386.



Fig. 1. Thorikos. Find locations of Late Classical and Early Hellenistic material in Thorikos (prepared by S. Mortier on the basis of map by K. Van Liefferinge, C. Stal, and A. De Wulf).

Other examples of these late lamps have been found in other places on the site. House no. 1 provides two lamps, one dating to the end of the 4th century and another dating between around 350 and the first quarter of the 3rd century BCE (Mussche 1968, 94-96; Blondé 1983, 99-100). In the destruction layer of *insula* 3 several lamps were found dating to 365-275 BCE, 325-260 BCE and 350-300 BCE (Mussche 1967b, 57-71; Blondé 1983, 99-100). Also, the Tower Compound showed some indications of late 4th/early 3rd century activity with two lamps dating to around 360-260 BCE (Spitaels 1978, 39-110; Blondé 1983, 99-100).

Thorikos has produced several examples of the kantharos, one of the main Late Classical and Early Hellenistic drinking vessels that originated in the 4th century BCE. Some of these examples can be dated to the late 4th century BCE. Others are to be dated earlier in the 4th century, for example those with rouletting and palmette decoration. This type of decoration appears at the beginning of the kantharos' development, but loses popularity later in the century (*Agora* XXIX, 83-93, figs. 4-11, pls. 1-13).

In the Theatre area excavations have been carried out in House no. 2, next to the Theatre. In the 4th century BCE this house was thoroughly rebuilt and repaired. The presence of sherds of 'Megarian' bowls indicates that it was still in use during the Hellenistic period (Mussche 1998, 34-35).

In square D4f0, part of the area south of the Theatre, an iron forge indicates metallurgical activity of a different nature than in previous periods. In the most recent layer of this forge a bronze coin dating to the 2nd century BCE, 17 stamped Hellenistic amphora handles, numerous fragments of Hellenistic amphorae from Kos (mainly 2nd century BCE) and a number of sherds of 'Megarian' bowls suggest a date in the Hellenistic period (Mussche 1998, 44, 64-65; Vanhove 2006, 114-138; Docter *et al.* 2010, 50).

Selection of finds from Cistern no. 1

In 2010 and 2011 excavations have been carried out in the largest cistern on the Velatouri hill (Cistern no. 1), which is situated in macro-square A'51 (see Van Liefferinge *et al.*, this volume). Cistern no. 1 belonged to a larger workshop of ore-washeries and cisterns situated around Mine no. 2. The structure is well preserved and was partly cut into the rock and partly built with ashlar masonry. The finds from the cistern's fill can be divided in two distinct chronological groups, namely pottery belonging to the Late Archaic to Late Classical/Early Hellenistic period and pottery belonging to Late Antiquity (Docter, Monsieur, van de Put, this volume, esp. 118-119, fig. 42). The large proportion of Late Classical/Early Hellenistic pottery, notably of the second half of the 4th century BCE, and more particularly of the decade 330-320 BCE, is remarkable (see also below, **Fig. 6**). It remains to be investigated whether this is a strictly local chronological phenomenon (i.e. in and around Cistern no. 1) or whether it conforms to a more general pattern in Thorikos. The presentation of the pottery from this phase found in the 2010 and 2011 campaigns may be a first step towards such an investigation.

Campaign 2010

Below, some more detailed information is provided on the Late Classical/Early Hellenistic finds from the 2010 campaign.⁴ Of the seven diagnostic kantharos fragments that were found in the 2010 campaign, six belong to the second half of the 4th century BCE and three can even be attributed to the last quarter of that century.⁵ One of these later pieces is a kantharos with ribbing. This type of decoration develops during the second half of the 4th century BCE. None of the earlier examples of kantharoi that have been found on other parts of the site have been found in the cistern thus far.

⁴ For full descriptions of these fragments one may refer to the catalogue entries in Docter, Monsieur, van de Put, this volume.

⁵ See Docter, Monsieur, van de Put, this volume, 79-80, cat. 7-13, fig. 5.

Other sherds that can be attributed to the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic period are two fragments of a skyphos, a rim fragment of a bowl, a rim fragment of a lebes, possibly a rim fragment of a lekane, a rim fragment of a jug, a base fragment of a trefoil mouth jug, and a neck-handle fragment of a Chian amphora.⁶ A fragment of a brown glazed bowl with rouletting and impressed palmettes from the 2010 campaign finds a good parallel in a bowl found in the 2011 assemblage (see below, **Cat. 4**).⁷ The very fragmentary spout of a lamp may tentatively also be attributed to a shape of this period; it has been compared by W. van de Put with an inkwell lamp from Thorikos dated between 375 and 300 BCE.⁸

Campaign 2011

Five pieces of the 2011 campaign can with some certainty be assigned to the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic period. The finds include three kantharos rims and two fragments of bowls with rouletting and impressed palmettes. Apart from these, one possible lagynos fragment, dating to the first quarter of the 2nd century BCE, has also been found in the cistern's fill.

Kantharos

Cat. 1: TC11.10 (context T11-5-1), 1 moulded rim fragment of kantharos (**Fig. 2**).

Max. diam.: 10 cm; good black glaze on inside and outside.

Clay: light reddish brown 5YR6/3⁹. Fabric with isolated white particle.

Cf. Agora P 13528/P12691 (*Agora* XII, no. 700/701)

Date: ca. 350-325 BCE.

Cat. 2: TC11.23 (context T11-5-2), 1 fragment of spur handle of kantharos (**Fig. 2**).

Max. diam. not to be determined; good black glaze all around.

Clay: reddish yellow 5YR6/6. Fine Attic clay, no inclusions visible.

Cf. Agora P 12691 (*Agora* XII, no. 701).

Date: as **Cat. 1**.

Cat. 3: TC11.81 (context T11-1-5), 1 moulded rim fragment of kantharos (**Fig. 2**).

Max. diam.: 10 cm; good black glaze on inside and outside.

Clay: light reddish brown 5YR6/4. Some white particles (< 0.1) visible.

Cf. Agora P 13528/P12691 (*Agora* XII, no. 700/701).

Date: as **Cat. 1**.

⁶ See Docter, Monsieur, van de Put, this volume, 76-77, 81, 87-88, 97-98, 102-103, cat. 1-2, 16, 36, 57, 59, 67, figs. 1, 8, 14, 22, 27.

⁷ W. van de Put dates this piece to the period 375-325 BCE, however, on the basis of the shape: Docter, Monsieur, van de Put, this volume, 78, cat. 6, fig. 4.

⁸ Docter, Monsieur, van de Put, this volume, 81, cat. 17, fig. 9.

⁹ Colour descriptions follow *Munsell Soil Color Charts* 1990 revised edition. Measurements are in cm unless otherwise stated.

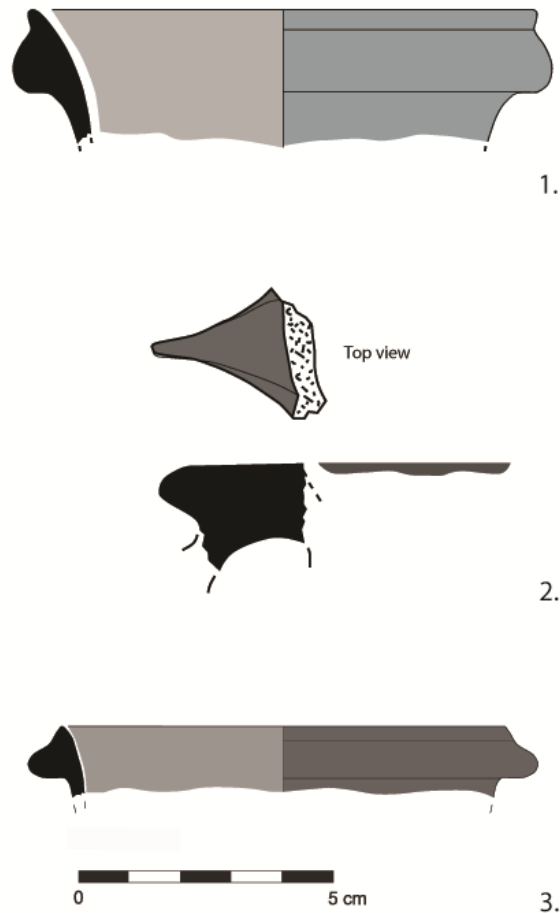


Fig. 2. Kantharoi.

Bowl

Cat. 4: TC11.85 (context T11-1-5), complete profile of small bowl (echinus bowl?) (**Figs. 3-4**).

Max. diam. rim: 9 cm; good brown glaze on inside and outside (2,5 YR 4/8); two impressed palmettes inside single-file rouletting.

Clay: red 2,5YR5/6. Very fine clay, no inclusions visible.

Cf. Agora P 4427 (*Agora* XXIX, no. 965).

Date *ca.* 325-300 BCE.

Cat. 5: TC11.120 (context T11-10-2), 1 rim fragment of small bowl (**Fig. 3**).

Max. diam. rim: 10 cm; brown glazed inside and outside (10 R 5/6); single-file rouletting around bottom.

Clay: light red 2.5YR6/6. Fabric with isolated dark particle 0.2.

Cf. Agora P 4427 (*Agora* XXIX, no. 965).

Date: as **Cat. 4**.

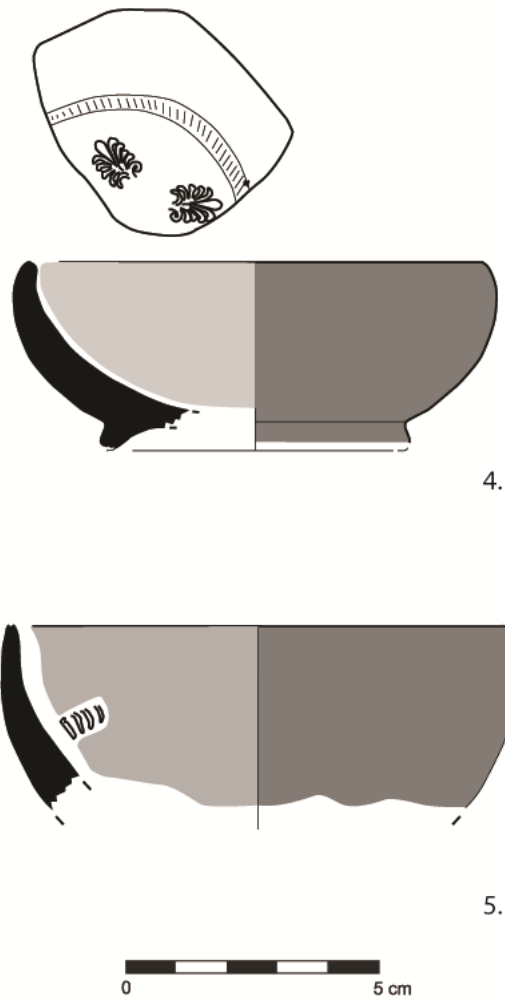


Fig. 3. Bowls.



Fig. 4. Bowl **Cat. 4**; photo's W. van de Put (not to scale).

This type of bowl originated at the beginning of 4th century BCE and lasted well into the Hellenistic period. The shape starts off as a bowl with incurving rim and a substantial ring foot. Later on, the shape develops a higher and thinner foot while the wall loses its curve and straightens out. The typical decoration with rouletting and palmette stamps is harder to put into a developmental sequence, since it is a very common pattern.

During the previous campaigns in Thorikos other examples have been found of wares resembling **Cat. 4**. In the western necropolis “céramique à palmettes estampées, beaucoup de poterie d’un brun rougeâtre” was found during the 1963 campaign (Bingen 1968, 79-80). *Insula 3* provided some bowls that are very similar to **Cat. 4** (same shape and decoration, but of a larger size) and that can be dated in the same period: ca. 325-300 BCE (Mussche 1990, 48-50). The 2010 campaign has yielded a similar fragment of a bowl or plate, which may be dated around 325 BCE.¹⁰ The diameter of the base is substantially larger than the examples found during the 2011 campaign and could thus also have belonged to a plate or large bowl (cf. *Agora* XII, P 13543, no. 835).

Lagynos (?)

Cat. 6: TC11.30 (context T11-5-2), 1 body fragment of lagynos (?) (**Fig. 5**).

Max. diam. body: 20 cm; brown glazed outside, partially worn off.

Clay: red 10R4/4. Possibly local fabric with isolated vacua and one small mica fragment.

Cf. *Agora* P18710 (*Agora* XXIX, no. 494).

Cat. 6 is possibly a fragment of a typical Hellenistic shape, a lagynos. Comparison of the fragment with examples from the Athenian *Agora* excavations provides good parallels for the shape leading to a date of ca. 200-175 BCE.

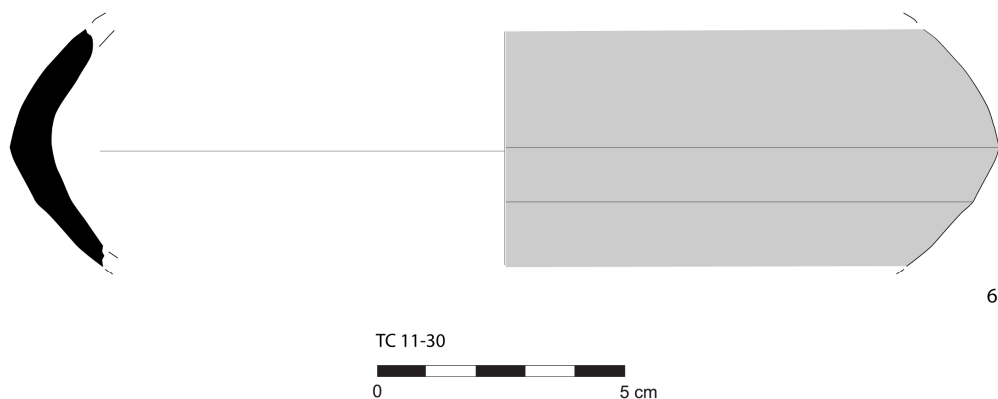


Fig. 5.

¹⁰ Or 375-325 BCE, see above, n. 7..

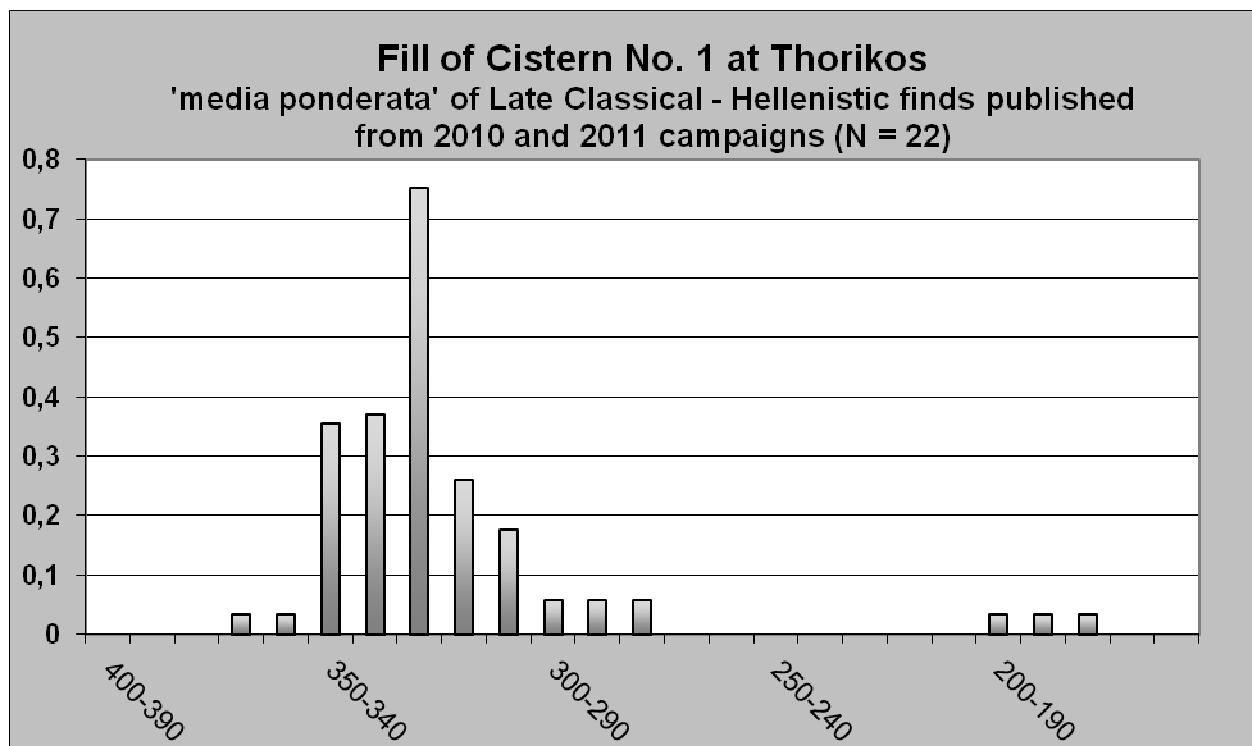


Fig. 6. Thorikos, Cistern No. 1. 'Media ponderata' of Late Classical and Hellenistic finds from the fill (2010 and 2011 campaigns); prepared by R. Docter on basis of this report.¹¹

Conclusion

Given the small number of sherds that can be attributed to the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic period, both in the earlier publication record of Thorikos and the 2010-2011 campaigns, it is still too early to grasp the full picture of the site in this period. Some aspects have become clear, however: the Late Classical and early Hellenistic period is indeed represented in the ceramic repertoire. Within the finds from the cistern published in this volume, the Late Classical and early Hellenistic period accounts for no less than 20% (**Fig. 6** and fig. 42 on p. 119, this volume). Although there are not many fragments published in absolute terms, those that have been, belong to shapes that were very common throughout this period (brown-glazed bowl, kantharos) and indicate a certain level of activity during this period. Another aspect that needs to be taken into account is the fact that some Classical shapes live on in later periods and are hard to distinguish from earlier varieties of the same shape, especially when in fragmentary state. Lekanoi for example are still popular during the Hellenistic period (Lüdorf 2000; Lüdorf 2010, 155-158). Some sherds actually belonging to the Hellenistic Period may thus have been erroneously assigned to the Classical period in previous publications.

¹¹ The graphic representation ('media ponderata') is based upon the work of N. Terrenato and G. Ricci: Terrenato, Ricci 1998; see also Van de Weghe *et al.* 2007.

It may be concluded that most fragments in the cistern's fill that belong generally to the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic period seem to date to the last thirty years of the 4th century, especially to the decade 330-320 BCE (**Fig. 6**). Pieces dating to the 3rd century have not yet been found with full certainty. A possible lagynos fragment (**Cat. 6, Fig. 5**) may well date to the 2nd century BCE, and would, hence, fit in the thin 2nd-century BCE stratum that has been attested elsewhere on the site (see above, the iron forge south of the Theatre). More examples of pottery dating to this period are needed, however, to change the chronology of the cistern's fill.

In this connection, it should be taken into consideration that the Hellenistic settlement could have been located in a different part of the site. A systematic survey of the Velatouri hill and the surrounding territory of Thorikos, which is scheduled for 2012 and the following years, may lead to more clarity on this point. Also post-depositional processes should be considered in explaining the chronological picture of the Industrial Quarter and, in particular, the workshop area of Cistern no. 1. This zone, as the rest of the settlement of Thorikos, is located on the lower part of the Velatouri hill. Erosion processes may well have brought in material from farther up the hill or, alternatively, have washed away the highest and most recent levels (Mussche 1998, 64).

In conclusion, pending a fuller and more intensive study of the Late Classical and Early Hellenistic period in Thorikos, the chronology and nature of the latest (pre-Roman) occupation of the site remain an open question. Only after a systematic study of Thorikos in this period, more general questions, such as the end of metallurgical activity in Thorikos and the Laurion, the role of the site within the economy of Athens, and the way the Athenians exploited their wider hinterland, may be addressed and answered.

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